

Donald J. Martin

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Dods and his Critics.

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Dods and his critics

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# DODS AND HIS CRITICS

BY

THE TOWN-CLERK OF EPHESUS.

"YE OUGHT TO DO NOTHING RASHLY."—ACTS XIX. 36.

"Audi alteram partem."

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SECOND EDITION.

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DINGWALL :

LEWIS MUNRO, ROSS-SHIRE JOURNAL OFFICE.

## NOTE.

A SECOND edition of my little pamphlet being asked for, I embrace the opportunity thus given for a word or two of explanation. I am not a man of war, I hate it in all its forms. But at times it would seem imperative, and so not only justifiable, but unavoidable. Sense of wrong to self or others sometimes forces even the man of peace to take up the weapons of war. From the first I saw I had to make up my mind upon the points in question, as that mind might soon be asked. Carefully and, I hope, prayerfully, I set myself, as best I could, to this task, till I came at last to pretty definite conclusions. These were forced from me first before my Presbytery, and then before my office-bearers, and, finally, the Conference convinced me that to keep silence would be wrong to myself and possibly to others, and so I came to give wing to my convictions.

I may explain further that the sense of wrong being done to Dr Dods alone impelled me, as I have but the slightest personal acquaintance with him.

The adoption of a *nom de plume* was for two reasons : (1) That my personality might not prejudice any force of truth there might be in my pamphlet : (2) I thought that the *nom de plume* carried in itself a lesson that friends might well take to heart, who to my mind were making a great cry without much reason. I may also add that the veil that covered my identity was really so very thin that parties desirous of so doing could have no difficulty in tracing the author. If I had wished to conceal my identity effectually I would certainly not have given the many clues I have, some of them very plain. As the partial concealment will by this time have worked its ends it may now finally take end.

DONALD J. MARTIN.

FREE ENGLISH MANSE, STORNOWAY,  
March, 1890.

## DODS AND HIS CRITICS.

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*"AUDI ALTERAM PARTEM."*

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THE time seems to have come when those who differ from their friends in the Highlands upon the Dods Question must speak out. Ease and expediency would counsel silence, but truth and fairness demand speech. The case appears to the writer to be one of misinterpretation, misrepresentation, and wrong. Dods is first misinterpreted—a meaning is put upon his words he never intended, then he is saddled with this misinterpretation. He is represented as saying either what he never said, or said not in the sense in which the words are taken, and then, of course, follows wrong, not intentional, we firmly believe, but yet really to him, to the Church that has installed him and still retains him as one of her professors, and, worst of all, to truth itself. That some of his words present a *surface* difficulty there is no use in denying, but that is the more reason why they should be subjected to the same calm, clear, considerate thought that first gave them being and form. None of Dr Dods's thoughts are surface, though his language is clear as a crystal rill; and this, taken along with Dr Dods's known candour and honesty, should have made men pause ere they rashly rushed to the conclusion that Dr Dods used his words to preach down truths that he had solemnly subscribed himself to defend. Surely such a charge of dishonesty implied in the charge of a departure, not personally, but in *public utterance*—for we quite agree with

his opponents in saying that it is his public utterances, not his personal or private beliefs we have to do with—from the Standards he had subscribed, should have made friends pause and question themselves as to whether after all they were not taking up the Professor in a wrong sense—in a sense foreign to his real meaning and teaching. This, we fear, many have not done. Just because Dr Dods's words are always the product of well-balanced thought, on that very account his writings, instead of having been taken up in a surface sense, should have been first sifted, weighed, viewed all round, taken in connection with the context of his discourse, the current of the thought of the audience he was addressing, and the current of his own thought at the time. But how very little of this kind of treatment have they got. Hence most, if not all, of the resolvings and pleadings have been upon a false issue altogether. Resolutions have been passed in defence of the doctrines of grace, which Dr Dods himself would have heartily signed or seconded, and speeches have been made in defence of the Bible with glorious panegyrics upon it to which Dr Dods would have rapped his approval—only minus the style. Would you believe—well I am anticipating. The writer was, as others, invited to the Conference. He refused for two reasons: first, after looking into Dr Dods's books and utterances he could find no difference between him and the members of the Conference as to belief or doctrine—the only difference he could find was that of charity, or mode of dealing with men in difficulty; and secondly even upon the supposition that Dr Dods was unsound, he could not agree with the mode of procedure—that of secret conclave, much less that of excited public meeting. This last mode seemed to him the most objectionable of all, and he could be no party to dragging such sacred subjects as our Lord's Divinity through the mire of an excited public meeting. One friend, in urging him to go, sent him, by way of inducement, copies of the proposed Resolutions, asking, among other things, if he could not agree to the first at least. In reply he said he would heartily do so if he saw the necessity for any such Confession or Resolution, but that, for his part, he did not, and suggested to his friend that a short

cut both to him and to the Conference out of their difficulties would be to send a copy of the Resolution to Dr Dods himself, and ask him if he could not and would not heartily sign it. This, of course, would have been to prick a hole in the whole agitation, and the writer has not heard that his advice was taken. One cannot help thinking but that such would have been not only the *fair* thing to Dr Dods before passing the Second Resolution, but also the Scriptural way of going about the matter, according to the Master's own direction in such cases (Matt. xviii. 15). Indeed, he has not learned that any of the Professor's accusers have taken this course. And the Professor's own attempts at carrying out this rule do not seem to have received a very gracious response, if a certain correspondence in the *Scotsman* is to be taken as evidence. However that may be, the writer himself, on thinking matters over, for his own guidance and that of others, and, generally, for clearing up the case, sent the Resolution to the Professor asking him if he could so heartily sign it. We here reproduce it, and the Professor's reply, and we calmly await the verdict of the public both on the Resolutionists and on him.

#### RESOLUTION.

“ We, ministers and office-bearers of the Free Church of Scotland belonging to the Northern Synods, in this Conference assembled, rejoice in the testimony borne by the Westminster Standards to the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, and to the other fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, and are agreed that it is our duty to unite and assist one another in endeavouring, in our place and callings, to promote the maintenance and defence of evangelical truth according to the said Westminster Standards.”

#### DR DODS'S REPLY.

“ 23 GT. KING STREET, EDINBURGH, 11th Dec., 1889.—Mr dear Sir,—The Resolution of which you send me a copy I can heartily subscribe. I have quite recently again signed the Confession itself, and it seems to me

monstrous that I should be charged with holding such views as are ascribed to me ; and how any man who has read what I have written can suppose I deny the doctrines of grace, or 'the essential doctrines on which these are founded' I do not comprehend.—Yours sincerely,

“MARCUS DODS.”

Having said so much, let us now enquire how Dr Dods's words have come to be so misunderstood, as plainly they have, and what is the real import of them. Now we have already said a little of the how ; but we may add a little more. Our thoughts on the how of the misconstruction may be summarised, thus : (1) They have been taken superficially, without friends waiting to search into any other deeper meaning than the surface one. (2) They have been taken out of connection, either with the immediate context or the whole discourse of which they form a part, and often a very small part indeed. He is often made “an offender for a word” (Is. xxix. 21). (3) The Doctor's whole view-point and train of thought are entirely overlooked. These things will come out as we proceed to try and find out the real import of Dods's words.

And here we may begin with the passage that has given most offence, caused most misunderstanding, and given rise to most perplexity. It is the now famous utterance, that “we must not too hastily conclude that even a belief in Christ's divinity is essential to the true Christian” (St. Giles's Sermon, p. 8). Now, as an instance, to begin with, of the confusion of thought with which this whole subject has been approached, I may quote Mr Macaskill's description of this sentence, in his speech at Dingwall Presbytery, in giving in the report of the Committee, as “Dr Dods's statement as to the person of our Lord” (Report of Committee of F.C. Presbytery of Dingwall, p. 9). The same thing is done in the body of the Report (p. 17), where this sentence is given under the heading of views as to “*Third :—The Person of Christ.*” Now, on the face of it, it is not a statement about the Person or the Divinity of our Lord at all, but about certain men and *their* attitude towards

His Divinity and Person. In fact, in the very statement the divinity of Christ is assumed—assumed as the thing not believed in by some. It is of those some that Dods makes the statement, not of Christ. Now, this may seem a slight mistake, but to me it seems to contain the germ of the whole agitation against Dods. Dods is by many in the Highlands considered to be unsound on the doctrine of the Divinity, the Person of our Lord, and we believe that, unintentionally we heartily believe on Mr Macaskill's part, but yet all the same really, this statement and classification of his of Dr Dods's views as being concerning the Person of our Lord, circulated, as those have been, broadcast over the Highlands, have done much in misrepresenting Dr Dods and his views. Mr Macaskill's statement of the case is, at its best, careless : it has, we believe, given rise to much misapprehension. Dods's views, whatever they are, are not views about the Person of Christ.

But, granting this, one will say, is not the statement taken, as it really is, one about unbelievers in the Divinity of our Lord, to say the least of it, strange and misleading, if not absolutely unscriptural ? To come to the point at once, does not the Scripture distinctly say, “He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John iii. 36) ? True. But if you will only examine Dr Dods's statement, even by itself, but much more taken with its following context—the whole paragraph on belief and faith—you will find that, so far from being contradictory, it is only really affirmative of that grand, but solemn truth. Take the statement first by itself. What are Dods's words ? “*A belief in* Christ's divinity.” Now, notice here two things :—first, that he uses the words “*belief in*,” viz., intellectual assent, not “*faith on*,” viz., heart *trust* ; and “*divinity*,” evidently in the sense of a doctrine, and not “*Person*,” which would be the corresponding object to *faith*. The whole alarm and agitation have arisen from interpreting Dods's statement as if it were equivalent to his saying that “*faith*” in Christ's person is not essential to the true Christian ; a statement which Dr Dods has never made, but to

which this much-alarming sentence is almost a contradiction—at least a counter statement. We have, in other words, in this sentence the distinction one hears again and again, and from none oftener than from my Highland brethren that are so doubtful of Dods—between mere assent and consent—between believing *about*, and believing or resting *on*—the one a mere act of the *head*—the second the whole attitude of the *heart* and soul. And this view of the passage is confirmed most emphatically as we read on. “Reunion to God,” he tells us, “depends so much more upon the conscience and on the heart than on mental enlightenment, that I would hope that the *faith*, small even as a grain of mustard seed, will yet grow up to a sound and healthy plant.”

Note several things here. Faith, in Dr Dods’s view, is not a mere intellectual assent, but a thing of the heart that secures our re-union to God. Then note well what we already anticipated, the contrast, not only between head and heart, but between belief and faith. This unbeliever in the divinity of Christ has *faith* on Him, though small even as a grain of mustard seed. Then, in further corroboration of this, he speaks twice over of “making Christ *practically* our God, by looking to Him for spiritual life, and by giving ourselves to Him as our absolute Lord.” Here we see another distinction clearly kept before him by Dods, but lost sight of, we fear, by many in judging of him and others, viz., that our Lord’s person, *metaphysically* considered, and the same considered *practically*, are different. All that Dods’s statement amounts to is this, that a man may have *metaphysical difficulties* concerning the constitution of our Lord’s Person, and yet may, in *practice*, be found subjecting both heart and life to Him; and that in that case we have no right to deny to him the name, seeing he has the reality. And thus we find that this paragraph, which is one, *not on the person of Christ, but on the nature of the faith that unites to Him*, closes with a contrast, clear and sharp and striking, between the man that does not say in so many words that he believes in Christ’s Divinity, but yet practically trusts and follows

Him, and the man who in words professes to believe in His Divinity, and yet in heart and life practically denies Him. And this is teaching for which a man in our Church is to be libelled ? Is it not the very teaching of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount ? “ Not every one that *saith* unto me Lord, Lord, but he that *doeth the will* of my Father which is in heaven shall enter into the kingdom of God.” Is it possible that for teaching the very same truth, in almost the very same words, one of our ministers and professors must be first suspected, and then suspended and suppressed ?

And this leads us further into something like a true grasp of Dods’s whole view-point in this sermon. Want of clearly getting at this has given rise to no small misinterpretation. He is answering the question, not “ What is a Free Churchman ? ” or, for that matter of it, a Churchman of any kind, but “ What is a *Christian* ? ” —a very different question, indeed. If he had been answering the first he would, no doubt, have been definite, and deservedly narrow : could not have been too much so, perhaps—as things go now-a-days—but that was not the task he set himself, but to answer the question “ What is a Christian ? ” Now, to answer such a question he was bound to drop all accessories whatsoever, and to answer, not so as to satisfy Churchmen or Free Churchmen, but truth ; he was bound in the interests of truth and Christianity itself, which is highest truth or nothing, to give a description of a Christian that could stand for his portrait in any Church or society whatsoever, one to be tried, not by the special standard of any particular section or sect, but by some universal touch-stone. He was thus bound to answer the question both practically and broadly. And he has done so. And it seems to me that the longer we study that sermon the more we shall be thankful that there is one in our midst, who with strong and intense beliefs of his own can yet handle with sympathetic touch the doubts and difficulties of others. His *practical* aim we have seen in his treatment of faith. In his next objected-to paragraph we see in his catholic *breadth* of treatment, viz., that which deals with the divergent views about the Atonement.

Now, let us keep clearly in view what it is that Dods has in view. He is not in the passage giving a statement of doctrine, either *his own* or *that of any Church*, he is simply trying to get at an answer to the question—*What is a Christian?* Surely there is no one in his senses that would answer that a Christian is one who holds a particular view of the atonement. Dods wants to get at, and he does get at, what underlies all forms of Christian belief, viz., Christian character. Are our friends prepared to deny the name and character of Christian to those that hold a view of the atonement divergent from the Confession, and it may be, divergent from the Word of God, and yet in affection, and character, and soul attitude to God and man are in all essentials Christians, lovers of God and Christ, and man, humble, and loving, and holy, and good? It has been alleged by Mr Macaskill, in his Report p. 16, that the alternative view of the atonement that Dr Dods gives is the "Moral," or Socinian. Now, on examination, we will find it is no such thing. It is rather the Row or Maurician theory—that of Dr Macleod Campbell, of Row. If we read it carefully, as given by Dr Dods, you will see that so far from Socinian is it that it actually implies and necessitates the Divine Person of our Lord, which no mere moral or Socinian theory can ever postulate, but must exclude. It in fact approaches the view given in a recent book on the atonement by Dr Simon, of the Congregational Hall, Edinburgh (Redemption of Man. T. & T. Clark), of which one critic says that "Dr Simon is fully entitled to claim for this view that it destroys the *raison d'etre* of the dissent from Catholic doctrine, known as the 'moral' theories of the atonement." Let us look at Dods's statement a moment, and I think this will become clear. "They consider Christ's life and death to be a manifestation or expression of His *redeeming* love, and that Christ came to the world to reveal God's love, and, *by dying, show that there was no bound to that love*, and that it *gave all that could be given*." Is that a "moral" theory? Is it not one of "*redeeming love?*" Could a mere man, which is the Socinian view of Christ's person, "*by dying show that there was no bound to that love?*" If Christ were not in this theory

the Son of God how could it be held by this theory “that God’s love *gave all that could be given?*” This second view of Dods, whosoever’s it may be, is certainly death to the mere “moral” or “Socinian” view. Are, we again ask, his opponents and critics prepared to give the negative to his conclusion that “in point of fact both theories of the atonement produce good Christians?” They may not agree with the views—Dods did not say *he* does—they may think them contrary to the Confession’s doctrine—Dods does not say whether or not, for it was not to the point—but are they prepared to deny the name and character of Christians to those that so differ from them? They may, if they like, deny them the name of sound or orthodox theologians, or theologians at all (they do not pretend to be, many of them), but are they prepared to deny them the Christian name and character? If not, then they and Dods are one; if they do, then where is their charity, and where their ground in facts? Take the case of Dr Macleod Campbell, of Row. As is well known, the Church of Scotland of his day found no place for him within the ranks of her accredited ministers, thrust him out as unsound, and yet never was there a whisper from the bitterest of his opponents calling in question his personal piety and real Christianity. Because both of them were too apparent, too real. The writer knew him intimately in the days long gone by. His house was his second home. He was the first that ever personally dealt with the writer about his soul, when he was still a schoolboy. Never to his dying day will he forget the quiet sick room, the loving hand laid upon his head, and gentle words of Christ and God, the soul and heaven. And in college days, it was he again that sought to lead the opening mind of the student still Godward with a touch and tact all his own. Who that ever came in contact with that gentle personality, however much he may dissent from his theological views, as dissent this writer does, ever deny to Dr John Macleod Campbell, of Row, the name and character of a good Christian? And that is Dr Dods’s whole point—that Christianity does not consist in particular views, but in character and attitude of soul to God and man. Is this heretical or even dangerous? Will his critics

maintain the contrary? Will they deny the fact with which he sums up the paragraph "that both views make good Christians?" If they do they have the whole Christian world and conscience, and I suspect, also the Word of God against them. The question is not, "Dost thou believe this or that theory of the Atonement?" But "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" To believe the first may make or unmake one a theologian, but to believe on the second will make one a son of God—a Christian.

And this practical aim of Dr Dods leads us on to the understanding of a phrase of his that has also been objected to as seemingly giving the Word of God a sort of secondary place. "The Bible is the most powerful agent, next to the lives of Christian people, in the propagation of our religion" (St. Giles's Sermon, p. 11). Now what is this, looked at calmly, but a commonplace of preaching? Are not the lives of professing Christians the grand hindrance at home and abroad to the progress of Christianity? Ask our missionaries what is the grand obstacle in the way of the heathen accepting Christ's teaching. Their answer will, I fear, be always the same—the lives of our countrymen, so-called Christians. Is it not a common saying that the Christian is the unconverted man's Bible? Does not Paul say to the Corinthians—"Ye are the epistle of Christ," "known and read of all men" (2 Cor. iii. 2, 3)?

Dr Dods's chapters on the Resurrection, in his Commentary on 1st Corinthians, are really a magnificent cumulative argument on behalf of that central fact of our faith. And yet even here he has been misunderstood. Mr Macaskill's extracts in his Report give a very good specimen of the way in which, by omitting Dr Dods's own position and positive beliefs, his statement of his opponents' views are taken as his own, and his charitable judgment of the men holding these views, is taken as at least a half approval or condoning of them. While refusing to ban the holders, he most emphatically and with keen logic, refutes their views. What earthly good it would do to condemn the men, in addition to condemning their views,

one cannot see. If Dr Dods's critics think that such personal banning would serve the ends of establishing Christian truth, they are welcome to their view : but surely Dr Dods may be allowed to choose what he thinks the more excellent way, of dealing gently with the men while dealing incisively with their theories, without being exposed to the charge of abandoning the Christian standpoint, and being charged personally with heresy. He wants to win to truth, not by the weapons of declamation and excommunication, but by those of reason and love. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all men, apt to teach, forbearing, in *meekness* instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure they should come to the knowledge of the truth." All the difference between Dods and his critics is that he believes in carrying out the above injunctions in all controversies, even with those that oppose themselves to the grand truth of the Resurrection. He believes, and perhaps rightly, that much harm has been done to the truth by the opposite course. He refuses to be anything else, even when arguing with and refuting the veriest sceptics, than candid, calm, and charitable, and he perhaps reads his critics a well-needed lesson in this. It surely is a new thing in our day when a man exposes himself to libel on this account. That is the forefront of his offence.

Another subject on which there has been a great outcry against Dods is that of his views upon the Bible. These have been spoken about and against as if they amounted to a denial of the Divine Authority and Infallibility of Holy Scripture. This again arises from a wholesale misunderstanding of Dods's position. Dods is pre-eminently an apologist. He addresses himself, not, like the most of ordinary preachers, to the *faith*, but to the *unbelief* of the day. This alone give a character to his most extraordinary utterances, such as the St. Giles's Sermon, the Pan-Presbyterian Address, the Resurrection chapters in Corinthians, &c., that the ordinary preacher or reader may not quite be able to understand. It is one thing to address, as is usually done, audiences that believe without question, in historical Christianity, and

to address oneself to an audience composed of those who either positively do not, or, at any rate, have doubts about it. All the preacher in the first case has to do is to press home trnht already believed—to enforce positions already granted. But with the latter it is far otherwise. He has, as the other has not, to consider a great many moods and tenses of prejudice, or conviction, or feeling, all not in favour of, but adverse to both his beliefs and himself as the exponent and the practical embodiment of them. Now it seems to me that the very first requisite for this last preacher is that he be left with a free hand to adopt his own methods, and that he be not at every single point subjected to the adverse criticism, or the still more hampering suspicion of the first brother, whose work is of an altogether different kind. Till this fact is recognised we shall have no peace in our Church, nor can we come near understanding such a man as Dr Dods. His heart is sore, bleeding for the scepticism of the day. In the high places of the field, in his contact with the thought and literature of the day, he is brought face to face with it. He cannot shirk it or his duty with regard to it. Surely the least he might expect from his Church he has served so long, is that she in all her borders would credit him with loyalty to her Standards, love to her truth, and fidelity to her faith, even when called in the defence of this last to speak calmly, not curtly, charitably not cynically, of the views and character of those that differ from him and her, and yet whom he would, if he could, joyfully win to her Standard. He has not got that credit, I fear—in some quarters at least. Whether he will get it by the Church as a whole remains to be seen. But if not, you may write Ichabod upon her walls. The sooner the Church awakens to the fact that there is a section, at least, within her fighting, not for new truth but simply for Christian liberty, the better—that there are men determined to fight for this at all hazards : liberty for others, if not for themselves, as Christian men and believers holding the Head, to use all the weapons of known truth, to employ all the modes of Christian defence, and to fight along the whole line of critical and apologetic enquiry and method, in the defence of the

Christian faith, without being subjected to suspicion, or saddled with a libel, or shackled by the views of So-and-so.

We are just as attached as our friends to essential truth and the evangelical faith ; but we claim more liberty, and we intend to fight for it. We love our friends, we love their system of truth : it is our own : but we do not love their suspicions and their narrowness : the longer we look at these the less we love them. If this liberty be not got in the Free Church, then we must get it elsewhere. Our hearts will be sore the day we leave her. She is our spiritual mother, the Church of our fathers, where we and they both worshipped, and heard the glad old story that has made all things new —for them and us,—but if she seek to strangle enquiry and hamper apologetic, then we and she must part, sadly, but surely. We shall seek a Church, not less sound in essentials, it is hoped, but less suspicious of her sons.

But to return to our point. Dr Dods is essentially apologetic. He is constantly addressing unbelievers, He has thus come to feel the absolute necessity of dealing, not in *theories* first, but in *facts*. He is face to face with the critical spirit and the scientific method, and unless he address himself to the first, and adopt the second, his efforts are likely to prove failures—would make grand popular sermons, but would effect nothing in the direction aimed at. Dods has thus been led to ask himself, what effect has the *à priori* method of stating inspiration and presenting the authority and infallibility (verbal) of the Bible had upon the sceptical mind. The answer has been forced upon him, by due experience no doubt, that it has had the effect, not of removing but rather of fostering or confirming scepticism. He has thus been led to form his theory of inspiration on scientific lines, viz., by first gathering and marshalling the facts, and then forming the theory from a consideration of these, and not by the old method of first formulating your theory and then getting your facts some way or other to square with it. The Bible itself, Dr Dods says, is its own witness, its own authority, and the facts

which itself presents to us must formulate for us the theory of inspiration. He thus distinguishes between *facts* and the *method* of their transmission—*Revelation* has to do with the first: *Inspiration* concerns the second. *Revelation sees* things—truths. *Inspiration sends* the same. Now, naturally, in the interests of the *facts* and *truths* of God's Word, Dods lays more stress upon the *facts* and the *truths* themselves than upon the *method of transmission*. He thinks that to begin by postulating that the method of conveyance is absolutely correct, and so to postulate it, as Mr Macaskill does in his Inverness speech, as to maintain that if you find one smallest mistake in this record you vitiate the whole of its evidence, is to do two things. (1.) To play into the enemies' hands and to give to the enemies and deniers of Bible fact and doctrine just the very weapon they want. They at once set to pick holes here and there in the record, discrepancies and misstatements, &c., and then they turn round and say, Now there is your infallible record—look at it—what is it worth: if it cannot be depended on for small things, how can it be depended on for great? (2.) To go against the law of evidence itself. You must first get your facts, then form your theory. The *à priori* method he condemns. And he has a right to be heard calmly. His method is (1.) To begin with the *facts*. He says to the sceptic: My religion is a religion founded on facts. The Bible is the record of these facts. It is, firstly, a book *historically* true. The matter of its absolute literal accuracy of detail is a mere secondary matter, important indeed in its place, but not first. Its *substantial* accuracy is the main point. On that I stand, and safely. Bring down the Bible, if you like, to the level of an ordinary history. As that, to be nothing higher, we say it is true, real history. It witnesses to the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, to the descent of the Spirit, &c. You may pick holes in the form of the record, you may find discrepancies or even misstatements in some of its parts, but its testimony, as a whole, is invincible. (2.) Then, as to the theory of inspiration, he would form this also on the scientific method—he would have the Bible speak for itself. Now, in all this, Dods's whole attitude and aim are

defensive, not destructive—constructive, conservative. It is sad that men cannot see this. He leaves the Bible practically to the believing man what it ever was and shall be, “the only rule of faith and practice.” It is hard for Dods whilst he is thus labouring for the conservation of the Bible, as such, to the believing and Bible-loving man, that he should be by many of these same Bible-loving men, thought of, spoken of, and treated as if he were seeking to rob them of it. It is this that makes one so sad. It is this that so stirs one’s spirit to its very depths. To see men you cannot but love—love them the more, the more you know them—love just because they so love their God, and their Saviour, and their Bible with such an absorbing intensity, speaking of another man that you love, and love, too, just because he loves that Bible, and is doing all he can to defend it and its truths, is what pains one so much. And surely in this connection the writer cannot deprecate too strongly the words of Mr Macaskill in his speech : words that institute a comparison as unwarrantable as one is sure it will be obnoxious to the speaker himself on reflection, when he says—“They know their Bible—aye, much better than many of the critics—for it is the daily food of their souls, their daily companion and counsellor.” No one that knows Dr Dods, that has read or heard his expositions, consulted his devotional manuals, sat under his prayers, but must feel how very inapplicable such a comparison is to Dr Dods, what an utterly false idea it gives of the man and his attitude toward the Word of God. It is to him the “daily food of his soul,” his “daily companion and counsellor.” The old story of Lewellyn, the Welsh hunter, and his hound, be it fable or truth, might well read us Celts a lesson against rash and hasty conclusions and their results. Lewellyn left his hound to guard the cradle of his sleeping boy. Returning, he found the cradle overturned, and his hound lying beside it, with his mouth all bloody. With one sweep of his claymore he struck dead the supposed destroyer of his child. Next moment he heard a cry from beneath the overturned cradle. He turned it up, and lo ! his smiling babe unhurt, and lying beside it a monstrous wolf stark dead, worried to death by the faithful hound.

The rash Celt had, in his Celtic fury, slain the one defender of his child. We fear that our Celtic brethren, so fondly right in their affection for the Bible, and yet so rashly wrong in their eager attempts to come at Dods with their ecclesiastic claymore, may imitate this mistake. Their mistake may succeed. They may expel Dods; but, if they do, they may discover, when too late, that they have actually slain the man that was doing his very best to save for them and himself what they both love best—their Bible and their creed. Judging by appearances, mistaking an upturned theory of inspiration for a destroyed Bible, they may, in their rashness, strike at the very watcher who has actually rescued it and its truths from the jaws of the wolf of scepticism.

And this brings us back to the point from which we started, viz., that the only difference between Dr Dods and his critics was one of charity—one of method of dealing with sceptics. We might add that in his methods he is nearer the old Protestant type than they. You find in their writings and speakings a constant appeal to authority; whereas Dods would make the Bible and the Confession their own interpreters. The first Reformers were very chary of any authority other than the Word of God itself. Their very theory of inspiration they, like Dods, formed from the Bible facts. Any one, for instance, familiar with the commentaries of Calvin will be at once struck by the utterly unhampered way in which he approaches points of criticism and Biblical research. Luther did the same. They neither knew nor owned any other authority than the Bible, as it interpreted itself to the individual conscience of the Spirit-taught man. The same might be said of our Westminster divines, and their Confession. They were far wider and more liberal in their interpretation of what views were, and were not, included under that Confession, than our friends. The Confession, like the Bible, must be its own interpreter. And it rests with the Church, not with individual members or a conclave of them, to say what views are, and what views are not, to be included under it. For instance, Dr Dods has hurled at his head Dr So and So's, or Mr So and So's

interpretation of that Confession ; as if Dr Dods had not his own right to interpret that standard, as well as they, and was quite as competent to. On Dr Dods's words, when he says, " I say plainly that if I supposed the Confession to mean what Dr Hodge says it means, I could not accept it," Mr Macaskill comments thus, (Report p. 6),—" That is what Dr Dods himself says. Now, the view held and ably expounded by Dr Hodge is the view propounded by Chalmers, Cunningham, Bannerman, Candlish, and still held by the Free Church, and *must always be held as long as her Confession remains as it is.* But Dr Dods honourably tells us he cannot accept the Confession on that ground. And, therefore, in accepting it the other day in Edinburgh, he must have done so, not as hitherto understood by his Church. To maintain, therefore, that all is safe, because Dr Dods the other day accepted our Confession of Faith as his Confession of Faith, and signed our Formula, is mere nonsense. Dr Dods puts his own interpretation on our Confession and Formula, and so receives them, but certainly not *as hitherto understood by this Church.* If Dr Dods and his followers are allowed thus to be a law to themselves, and put any interpretation on the Confession of Faith they please, let the Church say so ; but let us not be guilty of the hypocrisy of saying, all is right because they sign the Confession of Faith, when we know they do not do so, do not profess to do so, in the *sense in which the Church has hitherto professed to hold them.*" Now this is to my mind the most extraordinary comment. To begin with—Was Dr Hodge a Free Churchman ? When and where did the Free Church, as a Church, in any form or shape, adopt the interpretation or views of Dr Chalmers, Cunningham, Bannerman, Candlish, as binding the Free Church and her office-bearers ? All these worthy men expounded and interpreted the Confession of Faith, and, perhaps, formulated their own theory of Inspiration, but when did the Free Church ever bind herself, or her office-bearers, to these men's views, or, indeed, to any one view or theory of Inspiration ? And they would have been the very last men themselves to have asked it. Why, this is, on the face of it, to introduce a new term of subscription,

to meet which we must have a rider added to the Formula, viz., "according to the interpretation of, or according to the views of, Dr Hodge—or Dr Mactavish—or Mr Macaskill." It is just as one suspected. With such views of what subscription means of course there can be no satisfying of such men. There must be the rider to satisfy, viz., that the subscriber takes the Confession according to *their* view : for it amounts to that. It is they that have made the demand, not the worthy men whose names they invoke. Invoking of the dead—calling up of the shades of the Prophets is an old story, as old as the day of Endor, with sometimes just as awkward results as then :—that the recallers call up more than they bargained for. Dr Dods's letter at the beginning of this pamphlet will not satisfy them either, on the same ground, for there should properly have been a rider to that Resolution too, viz., "as interpreted by Mr Macaskill and Dr Mactavish." One thing we are quite sure of, that if ever the Free Church does formulate a theory of Inspiration—a thing she has not done—it will not be that either of Dr Mactavish or of Mr Macaskill as sketched in their Inverness speeches, for a more crude, cast-iron theory was never broached by sane men. If Mr Macaskill thinks his theory of Inspiration was ever that of the Free Church worthies he mentions, he is most mightily mistaken. They never broached such, far less thrust it upon others. But Mr Macaskill, and the friends of the Music Hall, would do both. Mr Macaskill may not modify his views, but I hope he will his language, if ever he takes pen or speech again. His anger may be hot, and his contempt mighty, but, surely, that is no justification of such expressions as the "boundless conceit of the whole thing," "the arrogance of this mutual admiration club of Scotch second-rate rationalists," "the rubbish heap of their critical jargon." These are embellishments of Celtic oratory that might well be missing from any future utterances. They are, we know, only sparks from the heat-white iron of Celtic intensity and integrity : for no one will deny these to the minister of Dingwall. But why all this fire and fury ? We have no hesitancy in saying, as we think, that it is from beginning to end a case of misunderstanding, giving rise to minis-

terpretation, and hence to all this intensity. The zeal is, and must be, commendable, but the issues are mistaken. Dods is sound to the core, and if only let be will prove a tower of strength, not only to our Church, but to the whole cause of Christian truth. He is a real Defender of the Faith. He should, as such, get the whole and hearty support of our Free Church, north and south. We hope our friends will soon see that.

One word more on some of the critics of the Press, and we are done. The *Scotsman*, of course, enjoys the fun, and acts the message-boy part : hisses on the combatants. He stirs up now one side, now the other, and the more fast and furious the fun gets the more he enjoys it. It is joy to his heart and marrow to his bones to see a row in the Free Church. He would enjoy nothing so much as seeing the whole thing go up in a blaze, or explode into fragments. Dods does not please him. He will not just at his bidding hurl the infallible Bible after the infallible Pope. Macaskill does not please him. They are old enemies. It suits him best to play the message-boy or the incendiary. He'll hound on the combatants. He'll put the match to the tinder. One is more surprised at the mistakes of such a journal as our *Courier*, usually very clear-headed and fair in such cases. It is only another illustration of the confusion into which seemingly clear and candid minds get about this business. It illustrates admirably what we have already said about misunderstanding, arising from want of thoroughly getting at Dr Dods's meaning and view-point and pondering carefully every single statement, nay, almost word, of his. In its leading article of December 13, on the Conference, it says :—"They (the people) have awakened to the consciousness that the teaching given by some of their accredited doctors of divinity is radically different from that which formerly prevailed in the Free Church." Again it says :—"It is quite clear that if the Confession of Faith is regarded as the standard, the critics of Dr Dods are sounder in the faith than he." Now, I would like to know what grounds our friend has for these statements : that the teaching given by some of their accredited doctors of divinity is *radically*

different from that which formerly prevailed in the Free Church? and that the critics of Dr Dods are on Confessional grounds sounder than he. I know the people think so, many of them because they are told so by their accredited doctors of divinity, but what foundation have such statements and surmises in *fact*? If it is quite clear to the editor of the *Courier*, it is not quite clear to the writer of this pamphlet, but the reverse is, else he, for one, would not have taken pen. If the *Courier* makes assumptions, and jumps to rash conclusions, and makes such rash statements, no wonder at others? The effect of not weighing each word of Dr Dods, and of a change of term, however slight, and the consequent misinterpretation of the Dr's meaning, is seen in another sentence in which it is said of Dods:—"He will not say that *faith* in the Divinity of Christ is essential to a true Christian." Now, I beg to say that Dods never said any such thing. The whole meaning of the utterance is changed by the substitution of "*faith*" for "*belief*," which latter is the word used by Dods. As we have already tried to shew, Dods distinguishes between *belief* and *faith*, meaning by the first a mere intellectual assent, by the latter a heart acceptance; and in the paragraph, as a whole he makes it evident that the case he has before him is that of one with intellectual difficulties about the divinity of Christ, metaphysically viewed, but having heart acceptance of him in the way of "*practically*" accepting Him as his God, by looking to Him for spiritual life, and "*by giving*" himself "*to Him as His absolute Lord*." A similar misunderstanding of Dods's attitude is seen in another sentence further down. "Again, on the Resurrection of our Lord, he refuses to condemn some German theory which is manifestly heterodox, and yet, in the same chapter, he builds up a powerful argument in favour of the Resurrection." Now, the writer has evidently failed to get at Dr Dods's method in dealing with sceptics, especially those looking towards orthodoxy, and consequently, can get no explanation of what he calls his duality. This explanation is the Dr's extreme charity and gentleness. If our friend would just read on he would find that Dr Dods does condemn the theory, and that in the most effective way:

that of showing its unreasonableness and unlikeness in face of contradictory facts. He distinctly, though calmly, disproves it. But *he does not condemn the man holding it* : and that is the sum and substance of his divergence from his Highland critics, and the clue to his whole position. And two things must be proved before he can be moved from that position : (1.) that such a position or attitude is heretical or contrary to our Confessional Standards, and (2.) that it is injurious to the truth proved and defended, and promotive of scepticism. Dr Dods evidently believes that he can best maintain the truth, and win men to it, by (1.) holding it himself, (2.) proving it in the face of adverse criticism, and (3.) dealing gently, charitably, sympathetically, with those who differ from it and him. That is his position, that is the whole front of his offending, and that the fruitful source of all the misunderstanding of him and his writings, and consequent misrepresentation and ferment.

The writer is now done, and he closes by saying, that three reasons, and three alone, induced him to take up pen : (1.) brotherly considerations—the desire to vindicate as far as he could, the character and teachings of one he thought to be misunderstood and misrepresented (unintentionally) ; (2.) personal considerations—to make clear his own convictions, and justify his own conduct in the matter, and (3.) public considerations—viz., those of the cause of Christ, of the Church, and of truth at large. If he hurt the feelings of any, he is sorry. It is not his intention, though as a Celt, deeply stirred, he may be found to speak strongly or even sharply. His hope is that, like him whose official title he has borrowed as a *nom de plume*, he may have been able to persuade his friends that they ought “to be quiet,” and, above all,

“DO NOTHING RASHLY.”



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Dods and his critics

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